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Ridley-Thomas Commends Board Support of Assembly Bill 591

The Board of Supervisors Tuesday threw its support behind proposed legislation to require oil and gas companies to disclose what chemicals they use during the extraction of oil and natural gas, a process known as hydraulic fracking.

Fracking involves injecting a mixture of water, sand, and chemicals at high pressure into underground wells to break up rock formations that would otherwise make the oil below inaccessible. This new technology allows oil companies to extract reserves of oil and gas in California that once were out of reach but that being the case, state regulators cannot fall behind when it comes to safeguarding the public.

Assembly Bill 591, sponsored by Bob Wieckowski (D-Fremont), requires the names of the chemicals injected into the wells to be posted on the State of California's Natural Resources Agency's Division of Oil, Geothermal, and Gas Resource's (DOGGR) website. The rationale behind disclosure is preventative, not punitive, with the goal of averting the kinds of water contamination problems that have surfaced in other states.

"This information is needed so that the environmental impacts of this technique can be considered and addressed," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, who sponsored the motion backing Wieckowski's proposed law. "Significantly, the legislation would require disclosure prior to the issuance of drilling permits."

Currently national and state regulatory agencies do not require companies to reveal the type and quantity of chemicals used in this process.

“The legislation promotes transparency,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. “Furthermore, it holds oil and gas companies accountable and safeguards county residents who live near oilfields such as those in the Baldwin Hills and Culver City areas. Residents have a right to know what chemicals are present in their neighborhoods. This is a matter of health, safety, and environmental impact.”

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